

ZYGOTE

Zygote admires the fortitude of the man who wreaks havoc by flattening phone masts, but prefers to make his own mischief by dancing naked under the stars wearing the head of a goat

NAMES ACHE

Guge Science and Technology, of Beijing, has filed a law suit against Google. Google is not listed in the Beijing telephone directory, but the transliteration of its name uses the same Chinese characters as Guge, which is being inundated with so many phone calls about the world's favourite search engine that normal communications have ground to a halt. "We only want Google to change its name. We will see what happens in court," explained the Chinese company.

Zygote awaits the verdict with interest. After several minutes of extensive research, he is ready to instruct his lawyers on behalf of Mrs Anthea McGoogle of Aberdeen, and George Oliver Ogle of Derby, who must be fed up answering enquiries about why Adwords are so useless.

MORAL FIBRE

Sibritt Löthberg from Karlstad in Sweden is 75 years old and has just got to grips with her first home computer. This is not a remarkable fact, until Zygote reveals that the old lady's domestic connection speed is 40Gbit/s, which is about as fast as it gets. At this speed a full-length, high-definition DVD can be downloaded in under two seconds.

The lightning-fast connection comes courtesy of Mrs Löthberg's lad Peter, who is a boffin in the realm of optic fibres. The secret of

his success relies on new modulation techniques that let signals flow between transponders without loss of data. Routers can be up to 1,250 miles apart without needing intermediary transponders, which puts the entire British population within range of Mrs Löthberg's home town of Karlstad.

OK, here's the plan: fibre-optic cable costs about 500 quid a mile, so if we all club together we could rig up a direct connection to her front parlour, and everyone in the UK could download everything we'll ever need before breakfast.

SILVER SURFIT

Zygote has celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the computer virus by dancing around a burning floppy disk, naked in the moonlight apart from the ritual goat's head and temporary tattoos. It was in the high summer of 1982 that Rich Skrenta, a 15-year-old high school kid from Pittsburgh, wrote the lines of code that first spread the malevolence. Ah, what days of innocence they were, when that first virus infected machines via floppy disks and caused a few lines of bad poetry to appear on the screens of puzzled Apple Mac users.

To find out what Mr Skrenta is up to these days, Zygote visited his website, where there was a neat link to the source code of the original virus. Within a nanosecond, a virus attack was launched against Zygote's computer, which is a PC

and not an Apple. For any reader who has suffered a virus attack and would like to send their best wishes to the daddy of them all, his email address is rich@skrenta.com.

BIG DOWN UNDER

If you've ever considered wrapping aluminium foil around your head to fend off brain-frying radiation from mobile phone masts and WiFi nodes, you've probably been thinking on too modest a scale.

John Patterson is a 45-year-old ex-employee of Telstra, Australia's biggest telecoms provider. After leaving the company, he reckoned his health had been damaged by signals from wireless connection relay masts, so he did what any red-blooded Oz would do to remedy the problem. He borrowed a 15-tonne armoured personnel carrier and proceeded to knock down every phone mast he could find around western Sydney.

Encouraged by a crowd of onlookers, and too big to be stopped by a convoy of 23 police cars, Mr Patterson knew exactly where his targets were and how to flatten them, and knocked out half the city's mobile communications before his battle-tank stalled. The police approached with caution, as there was a replica cannon welded to the vehicle, but eventually got their man. Magistrates charged Mr Patterson with dangerous driving and refused to grant him bail, but he is now a folk hero down under.

Zygote found the location of any UK mobile phone base station on www.sitefinder.ofcom.org.uk. Unfortunately, the site does not list the location of 15-tonne armoured personnel carriers.

GOV AND TAKE

A report from the National Audit Office admits that the quality of UK government websites has not improved since 2002. Much more worrying is the fact that many departments have no idea who uses their sites, or for what. The answer is likely to be bugger-all for sod-all, because most government websites contain reams of text-swollen pages about policy information, which is of no consequence to the citizen.

But the situation is changing, and Whitehall is in the process of slimming things down to just two sites: the rather good www.direct.gov.uk, and the truly appalling www.businesslink.gov.uk. At the time of writing, the latter site displays a 'service unavailable' warning and a little graphic of a no-entry road sign. The cost of running these websites? A mere £208 million a year.

YOU GOTTA BE KIDMAN

After hiring actress Nicole Kidman as the face of More Brain Training From Doctor Kawashima, Nintendo has come up with an even dafter way to generate amusement in the home, on the train, in restaurants, at work, and anywhere you can use one of its portable DS consoles.

Nintendo's new Kao Training software uses a camera to record a series of grotesque face-pulling exercises devised to make your skin more elastic and your ugly mug "much younger and prettier". The release date for the companion software, Doctor Kawashima's Treatment For Punch In The Face From Insulted Onlooker, is as yet unknown. Sayonara. ☹

